



**Testimony of the Connecticut Children's Medical Center
to the Higher Education & Employment Advancement and
Public Health Committees
Regarding the Development of a Regional Neonatology Program
March 15, 2010**

Senator Handley, Senator Harris, Representative Willis, Representative Ritter, members of the Higher Education and Public Health Committees, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Martin Gavin, and I am President and CEO of the Connecticut Children's Medical Center. I am here to speak to you about the proposed plan the Governor recently described regarding the University of Connecticut Health Center. The proposed initiative brings together many long-term partners to benefit the economy and enhance the health care system for Connecticut's citizens while advancing the Health Center's education, research and patient care missions.

For several reasons, I support the key components of this plan, but primarily because it will strengthen critical relationships among area hospitals, taking advantage of the wealth of talent in our system. The renovation of existing space and the building of a new bed tower at the Health Center, the location of a new Regional Primary Care Institute at St Francis Hospital and the development of a Regional Simulation Center at Hartford Hospital will result in growth and economic opportunity while raising the quality of health care in the state.

The proposal also includes the establishment of a regional Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) premier program which will advantage the Medical School, the Health Center and, most importantly, Connecticut's families. Integrating the neonatology health care professionals and units are key steps in elevating the scale and breadth of the Connecticut Children's program. Operating a 72 bed service would make our combined NICU one of the strongest academic NICU programs in the region while freeing up the Health Center license for 46 -50 additional medical-surgical beds thus generating additional revenue for the state. This model will not reduce the size or location of the Health Center NICU nor impede the public mission to care for our most fragile babies, but rather will improve the efficiency of the patient triage process and support advances in technology available to Connecticut's children. The consolidated NICU program will assist in promoting clinical research and attracting talented faculty while strengthening our educational program at a time of competition for strong candidates. The stability of a regional NICU and united partnership vision will also support the Health Center's maternal-fetal medicine program.

Pediatrics is very specialized and expensive. Approximately 20 years ago, the Greater Hartford community made a well reasoned commitment to bring together the pediatric services of area hospitals and create one regional children's medical center in an effort to

provide the best medical care for our children. Connecticut Children's is the result of that successful collaboration and bringing together the NICUs is the last step in that commitment. The establishment of our Premier Program in Neonatology affiliated with the University of Connecticut will demonstrate the state's commitment to providing the highest level of quality neonatal services possible to the residents of the region.

The increased scale that will result from the collaborative establishment of a regional NICU will improve outcomes for our patients and families. Nationally, outcomes for infants needing complex surgical procedures consistently show relationships between the volume of procedures and risk-adjusted mortality and length of stay. Connecticut Children's, which is already well on its way to demonstrating the quality outcomes that will enable it to be ranked as a top 10 program, will be significantly aided by the additional scale, which will provide better access to data, and enable key investments in technology and clinical research.

The regional NICU will provide a full range of services, advanced models of care and access to input from a full complement of pediatric specialists. As the hub of a NICU network, Connecticut Children's will be able to develop outreach, education and training for community hospitals thus raising the quality of care for all babies. The integrated program can become the regional training center for neonatal care for physicians and other allied health professionals.

Over the past 4 years, Connecticut Children's growth across the full spectrum of pediatric services has led to over 460 new jobs, including physicians, nurses and other health care professionals. Growing our neonatology service will similarly have a positive impact on jobs and the local economy. The creation of a regional NICU is an investment in the future economic success of the State of Connecticut and in the future of our children.

The potential for economic growth, new jobs in health care and biomedical research, and the advancement of a nationally recognized medical school all present Connecticut with a compelling opportunity that we should not squander. I urge you to support the Health Center proposal.